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Introduction: Vs. 1-9

Behold your God!

Behold is a fun word to say. Behold! It simply means “Look!” or “See!” or “Here” with strong force behind it. We could say that Behold means: You need to see this! It’s right here! Look! You don’t want to miss this!

For example, if I wanted to show you this glass right here, I probably wouldn’t say, “Behold – this cup!” There isn’t anything super exciting about it. There is no need for you to see this cup.

But there would be other times I could say it. I’m sure you’ve said it or have had it said to you, something like: You have to see this! Look! Don’t miss it! It’s right here!

I think of sports games where a player makes an insane play and we might scream, “did you see that!” And if we have a TV, we might go to watch it on replay and be excited to show others this spectacular moment.

I think of hiking with someone, and they are hiking ahead of you. They reach the summit before you and see out – and to motivate you, they might say – Hurry up! You have to see this! Look at this view right here! You can’t head back until you see it.

If your son or daughter builds something with Legos or building blocks and they are really proud of it, they will come to find you and say, “come and look! You have to see it. Drop what you’re doing and see!”

Behold!

Our text this morning in verse 9 says: Behold your God!

This simple message was proclaimed to the Israelites as very good news. To be heralded from the tops of mountains and shouted for all to hear unashamedly. Announcing it to gladden their hearts. Because their hearts were in deep despair. In Isaiah 39, we read how the exile was prophesied to King Hezekiah. God said it was coming and it did. Because whatever God says will happen – will happen. Homes were destroyed. Jerusalem was torn apart. Their beloved temple was burned. And the people were forced to leave and go to Babylon. There is about 160 years between Isaiah 39 and Isaiah 40. 160 hard years. We can read some of the laments in Psalm 137 and Lamentations. They are intense laments. Full of pain from being torn away, being mocked by their captors, and receiving zero comfort. 160 years – no one came to intervene. No one came to save them. That’s a long time of not hearing from God.

Then God speaks. He’s going to bring comfort to his people. He is going to step in. Enough is enough. We get a cool highway image here:

A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord (for YAHWEH); make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” We can imagine a superhighway going to be built from Babylon to Jerusalem so all the exiles can come home in front of everyone in a very direct and efficient manner. Even though the people are like grass and flowers – they wither and fade with wind, it is still worth it for the Lord. And whatever God says will happen – will happen.

So, it’s time for the people to hear the good news. And what is this good news that will be heralded from the high mountain? What words will be lifted up boldly with a strong voice? The gospel is: Behold your God!

Look! Here is your God! Don’t miss this. Do you see Him? Drop whatever you are doing and look at God! That is the message that is to gladden the people’s hearts: Behold your God.

Let’s continue through our text. It serves to enhance our view of who God is and why his presence in and of itself is the gospel. For God’s people then – and for us now.

Section 1: (vs. 10-11)

The Lord comes with power. Remember when he brought his people out of Egypt with his mighty outstretched arm – he changed the laws of nature to bring locusts, perpetual darkness, hail, painful boils on skin, etc. The Lord is pictured here as being one with massive power and might. Bold and strong. Someone that does not lose.

The Lord pictured as a victorious warrior is coupled with a picture of the Lord as a gentle shepherd. He picks up the lambs that can’t keep up with the flock. They are too little and might get left behind. All those cute newborn lambs, they are carried in the fold of his cloak, close to his heart. Then there are the young mothers that are still nursing their babies. He sees them too. He protects them so they will not be trampled. He leads them gently and ensures they will be ok.

He is mighty enough to break our chains of bondage and gentle enough to care for our everyday needs. Behold your God.

Section 2: vs. 12-15

In 2013, I heard in the news that a popular actress was arrested for disorderly conduct. What was newsworthy about it though, is how she responded to her arrest. She kept saying, “do you know my name?” and “do you know who I am?” Presumably asking these rhetorical questions to evade arrest on the basis of her fame. Maybe thinking, well, if this police officer just knew who I was, he would not arrest me.

The Lord asks us some rhetorical questions.

Who has measured the waters?

Who has marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth?

Who has weighed the mountains and the hills?

These questions zero in on one question – “do you know who I am?”

Presumably asking these rhetorical questions to illustrate his greatness – if we just knew who he was, we would receive comfort.

Do you think all the waters in the world are great? God can hold the ocean in his hand. What about the heavens? God can measure them using the length of his hands. Do you think your house holds a lot of dust...can you imagine all the dust on the earth? God can put it all in a basket. We've all walked up hills and gotten tired. We've seen mountains and marveled at them. God can put a mountain on a scale and weigh it just like we might use a kitchen scale to weigh flour.

What makes us think we know better than God? He doesn't consult anyone first and get permission. We are not *his* counselors. We don't approach him to give him advice. How dare we tell him that he is in the wrong or try to make him understand us as if he didn't know.

The greatest and grandest things on earth cannot measure up. He is strong enough to break our chains of bondage and gentle enough to care for our everyday needs. Behold your God.

Vs. 15-17

A quick Google search tells me that there are around 200 countries in the world. We live in Canada – one of the largest. We live right next door to the United States – also large and very powerful. Many of us have travelled and have been to other countries to visit – Holland, England, Switzerland, Mexico, and Peru.

For a lot of the past year, we have been hearing about Russia and their invasion of Ukraine – we are wondering who our allies are and Russia's allies. Where does influential China stand? What is all of Europe saying? Who will win? The world is massive.

God says that all of the nations are like a drop in a bucket. They are not that important. Pretty trivial, actually. Notably, all the nations in the world hold no threat – any power they have comes from God anyways. Russia? China? Canada? United States? Lebanon? Babylon?

All the nations are as fine dust before him. The greatest and grandest things on earth cannot measure up. He is mighty enough to our break chains of bondage and gentle enough to care for our everyday needs. Behold your God.

Vs. 18-24

Who can compare? To what image would we compare? Imagine a wealthy person. They desire to worship God. They go out and buy some expensive gold and bring it to a metal worker. But, as wealthy as they are, they are too cheap to make the whole thing gold – the inside is cheap metal, and the metal worker overlays it with gold. And this gold image, well, it might fall down, so it's important that the metal worker fashions it with silver chains, so it stays steady.

Imagine a poor person. They also desire to worship God. They can't afford gold though, so they go into the forest and find a nice tree maybe, then bring it home. Part of it they might use for firewood to keep warm, but another part of it – they are going to bring to a skilled worker so they can take this nice piece of wood and ensure that it will not topple over.

Both people take their idols home for their god, set it down somewhere, and declare – “this image is just like Yahweh” and proceed to worship.

Can one have a lower opinion of God? That the god they desire to worship can be made of cheap metal, throw into a fire, and easily bumped off a table. One can make God out to be whoever they want.

Congregation, to what image will you liken God? Is he a god of your own craftsmanship? Giving him a cheap inside with a glossy over layer – using God to make you look good? Wanting to hide the attributes of God that make us uncomfortable? God is love. God is holy, holy, holy. God is gracious and full of mercy. Hell is real and God judges us. God is our friend. God is our King and far from our equal. God loves justice. God loves righteousness.

Congregation, what God do you bow down in worship? Is he flimsy? Does he just fall over and bow to you? In other words, does the God you worship agree with you all of the time?

Do you not know? Have you not heard?

Here's an image for us: The Lord God Almighty sits enthroned above the circle of the earth and all of us people are like grasshoppers. We are like mist... here for a little while then gone tomorrow. Every power in the universe submits to Him. Kings and nations tremble at his voice. If God blows... they wither and they are swept away like chaff. Our God does not topple over.

He sits enthroned as King above the circle of the earth. Nothing can compare. All the nations are as fine dust before him. The greatest and grandest things on earth cannot measure up. He is mighty enough to break our chains of bondage and gentle enough to care for our everyday needs. Behold your God.

Vs. 25-26

Have you ever lifted your eyes and looked to the heavens? What would you see?

The sun. The moon. The stars. Technically, the sun IS a star. It's the closest one to the earth and we know the name of this one star.

God created all that we can see. And God created all that we cannot see.

Here is something we cannot see. This was taken by the Hubble telescope. It's the whirlpool galaxy. The whirlpool galaxy is 31 million light years away. Light travels at 300,000Km per

second which means that light travels 9.46 trillion Km per year. So, if you travelled 9.46 trillion Km in a year, you would get there in 31 million years.

Louie Giglio, where I got this information from, says something like, “we measure things with rulers and yardsticks and miles. But in the neighborhood of God, we have a God who measures things in light years.”

They estimate that inside this galaxy there are 300 billion stars in it and this galaxy is one of 100’s of billions of other galaxies that God has made. 300 billion stars in one of 100’s of billions of galaxies.

One by one – God brings them out. He calls forth each of them by name. We know one star by name, God knows trillions upon trillions. And because of God’s great power and mighty strength, He knows where all of them are – in this expanse of millions of light years – not one star goes missing.

The heavens declare the glory of God. He brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. He sits enthroned as King above the circle of the earth. Nothing can compare. All the nations are as fine dust before him. The greatest and grandest things on earth cannot measure up. He is mighty enough to break our chains of bondage and gentle enough to care for our everyday needs. Behold your God.

Conclusion: Vs. 27-31

At the end of Isaiah 40, God answers a specific accusation from his people. God asks, “Why do you say, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God’?” I think that’s a reasonable accusation. It makes sense to me that God’s people would be wondering that after waiting and their parents waiting and their grandparents waiting... for 160 years in terrible hardship.

I’ve accused God of not caring or not noticing in my 36 years of being on the earth. I’m sure we all come before God with big things and little things: God, don’t you care about the disease in my body? God, don’t you notice that this red light is taking forever and is making me late.

As I was writing this sermon, I had the opportunity to put this in practice. Something happened that caused me some distress, and of course, I cry out to God. Because I was in the middle of writing this sermon, I realized when I was saying things like, “don’t you care, God? Is my situation hidden from you? Do you disregard me?” What I am really saying is, “Do you see me, God? Do you see my pain, God?”

God overwhelms us with his response. He responds back to us by saying, “Look at me. See me. Here I am. Do you know? Hasn’t anyone told you?”

The Lord is the everlasting God. The Creator of the ends of the earth. He hasn’t stopped working. He hasn’t left us alone. God doesn’t get tired or need rest. The opposite, actually. He is

very attentive to those who grow weary, who are exhausted. He is the source of their strength. We remain in weakness without the Lord. But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

When we look at God and who he is, we know that he is a God who sees, who knows, who understands, who councils, who is might, gentle, victorious.

We get an even fuller view of our Triune God than those hearing these glad tidings then. That fun superhighway image is in all 4 gospels. In the beginning of all 4 accounts of introducing who Jesus is. Mark puts it like this in the very beginning of his account:

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” “a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

John the Baptist is that voice and he prepares the way for the Lord.

God has personally stepped in and intervened in a very direct manner. Even though we as his people are like grass and we complain about waiting at red lights – it’s was still worth it for our Lord to go to that cross. It was worth it for God to pay for our sins with his own blood.

Because of the cross, the Lord himself became that superhighway to bring all of us out of spiritual blindness and exile and into the comfort of his presence. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. The King of kings. Our wonderful counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace.

Because of Jesus, we get to be with God in his presence with easy access. Now through the Holy Spirit and for forever. When we turn our eyes on Jesus. We see his might, his power, his resolve, his gentleness, his grace, his love... When we turn our eyes to see who God is, the world and everything around us looks different. We see the world differently because we aren’t really looking at it – we are looking at God.

In my recent experience that I shared; it took a conscious effort for me to look at God. To behold him. And I didn’t feel an immediate comfort, but I felt the beginnings of it and the more I consciously looked at God, the more comfort came to me and so did the ability to rest in his presence.

Hear the good news Trinity church that I herald from high upon these stairs: Behold your God! He has felt the nails upon his hands and bore all of our guilt. God eternal, humbled to the grave. Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign. He will reign forever. The heavens declare the glory of God. He brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. He sits enthroned as King above the circle of the earth. Nothing can compare. All the nations are as fine dust before him. The greatest and grandest things on earth cannot measure up. He is mighty enough to break our chains of bondage and gentle enough to care for our everyday needs. Behold your God.

Come – let us adore Him. Amen.